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ABSTRACT

This document describes the Central Minnesota Teacher Education Council (CMTEC), a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation whose purpose is to promote the improvement of teacher education with emphasis upon student teaching internships, and research. Membership of the Council is made up of representatives from each of the public school districts that provide major field experiences, supervising teachers, and college representatives. Council members are responsible for interpreting Council activities to their districts and their districts to the Council. Also covered in the document are the financial structure of the Council, descriptions of the board of directors (three school administrators, three supervising teachers, and three college faculty members), and examples of CMTEC projects. In addition to providing a financial base for implementing programs mutually advantageous for CMTEC area public schools and the college, one of the greatest advantages of CMTEC is its unity. As a result of this unity, Council recommendations are supported by all participants; thus, change takes place much more smoothly. (JA)

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COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CENTRAL MINNESOTA TEACHER EDUCATION COUNCIL

by

Floyd Perry and Erma I. Sentz

Agreeing with such authorities on teacher education as Edelfelt (2), Andrews (1), Olsen (4), and McGeoch and Olsen (3), who all endorse cooperative ventures between public schools and colleges, E. Brooks Smith (6) concludes:

> If the schools were to take on the total responsibility for teacher preparation, they would have to start building local teachers colleges under the aegis of school boards. If universities were to take on the total job, they would have to begin building not one but many new and expensive laboratory schools to take care of the new clinical dimensions of teacher preparation. Clearly, a new school-university partnership is essential.

However, in most of the available literature, a description of such a partnership is lacking. Many so-called partnerships in the past have disintegrated into nothing more than gripe sessions, with decisions still being made by a few college administrators.

Is it reasonable to assume that college administrators are in a position to structure the most effective field experiences in teacher education without a minimum of continued exposure to the changes, innovations, and problems in public schools? On the other hand, is it reasonable to expect public schools to continue providing meaningful field experiences without an understanding of the total teacher education program on campus? It is the opinion of these, and other authors, that cooperation and understanding between these two groups is essential in establishing sound policies and procedures for effective, realistic teacher education activities.

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The Central Minnesota Teacher Education Council

One example of a successful, public school-college cooperative decision-making group in operation presently is the Central Minnesota Teacher Education Council, more commonly known as CMTEC. CMTEC was designed and started by the Director of Student Teaching (5) at St. Cloud State College in 1966. Membership is made up of representatives from all the public school districts providing major field experiences for the college and college representatives. Both of these groups are involved on an equal basis in a variety of ways in recommending changes, promoting innovative activities, and encouraging the continuation of sound practices.

Purpose and Composition

CMTEC is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation. Its purpose is to promote the improvement of teacher education with emphasis upon student teaching internships, and research.

It is composed of one representative from each of the school systems that cooperate in the student teaching program, plus three supervising teachers and five college representatives. College representatives include the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the School of Education, Director of Student Teaching, and a College Supervisor. Public school representatives are either the Superintendent or someone designated by him in each district. The Board of Directors consists of three supervising teachers, three school administrators, and three college representatives. Both the Council and the Board of Directors meet on a regular basis.

Unique Features of CMTEC

There are several unique features of CMTEC, as compared with other councils of this type, which have been identified as contributing factors to its continued success. The role of council representatives, the financial base that has been established for operation functions and promoting worthwhile activities,

and the function of a Board of Directors who are responsible for decision-making and implementing activities between total membership meetings are among those features. Also, policy-making administrators from St.Cloud State College and the various school districts are included on the Board of Directors to facilitate action on programs and insure communication between the two groups.

Role of the Representative

Basically, council representatives interpret council activities to their districts and their districts to the council. They are challenged with thoroughly understanding the student teaching program in order to explain and support it in their districts; in addition, they are asked to encourage the implementation of changes and programs that are endorsed by the council. At council meetings, the representatives make recommendations and vote according to the needs and expressions of their schools and the program in general. It is important that council representatives communicate freely and honestly with district and college personnel in order to fulfill their responsibilities. Ideas for the council are often generated from supervising teachers, student teachers, public school administrators, and college faculty members who relay their ideas to the district or college representatives.

Financial Structure

The financial structure consists simply of an agreed upon redistribution of funds regularly used for field experiences in the Minnesota State College System. Presently, the following pattern is followed: Because $4.00 per credit hour is given to school districts for student teaching, and because St.Cloud State College offers 16 credit hours for student teaching, each district receives $64.00 per student teacher placed in that district. Out of the $64.00, $30.00 is divided between supervising teachers, $9.00 remains in the district for professional activities, and $25.00 is placed in the CMTEC treasury.

CMTEC, in turn, provides $10.00 of the $25.00 for pre-service and in-service

professional activities in each of the centers as determined by a team consisting of the Center Coordinator and a district representative. Providing special workshops for teachers and student teachers, professional resources, and opportunities for supervising teachers to learn specialized teaching analysis and human relations skills are typical ways the $10.00 is spent.

The remaining $15.00 is used primarily for general CMTEC projects that have been approved at the annual business meeting and operational expenses. Typical expenditures of this fund include developing innovative programs, research, encouraging CMTEC involvement in local and national teacher education activities, and conducting workshops for all the CMTEC districts. Although guidelines for the use of these funds are established by the total membership as stated above, the details and implementation of approved projects are left to the discretion of the Board of Directors.

Some examples of CMTEC projects include administering the Purdue Opinionnaire quarterly and analyzing the data to evaluate on-going programs, partial support for experimental internship programs, and bringing national leaders to the CMTEC area to share ideas. Recently, a group of 65 teachers, principals, and college supervisors were sent to the Association of Teacher Educators sponsored summer workshop on "Assessment of Teaching Performance" in Fredonia, New York. Each participant was challenged with learning at least one new skill to share in teacher education activities in CMTEC districts upon their return. A workshop for public school and college administrators covering legislative and legal aspects of student teaching was sponsored later the same year. These participants had opportunities to question, challenge, and recommend changes in teacher education as they shared ideas and learned more about current issues from leading legal and legislative resource personnel in the state.

Twice each year, supervising teachers are invited to workshops in specific subject

matter areas as they apply to teacher education. These are held on the St.Cloud State College campus, but the programs are planned and presented by teams of public school and college faculty members. Issues that are discussed, and teachers' reactions to them, serve as guidelines for developing programs and recommending changes at the annual CMTEC business meeting.

Board of Directors

The nine member Board of Directors is made up of three public school administrators, three supervising teachers, and three college faculty members. They serve for three-year terms, with one-third of the Board elected each year. A balance of interest is sought by striving to have equal numbers of rural, urban, and suburban members; in addition, the three supervising teachers represent elementary, junior high, and senior high school classes respectively. The Dean of the School of Education, the Director of Student Teaching, and a college supervisor balance the college representation.

The Board of Directors elects a president, vice-president, and executive secretary annually; and meet at regular monthly intervals to implement the programs approved by the total council at the annual business meeting. They also suggest changes, programs, and innovations as various needs arise. However, any major recommendations generated by the Board of Directors must be approved by the total council at the annual business meeting or a special session called by the Executive Secretary.

The Executive Secretary

The responsibilities of the executive secretary include notifying members of meetings, distribution of minutes, handling financial transactions and submitting reports of these, serving as a liaison between the college and CMTEC representatives, and providing overall leadership for CMTEC sponsored activities.

Although this is an elected office, the Board of Directors has consistently re-elected the Director of Student Teaching to this position. By doing this, the

executive secretary has provided long range continuity, leadership, and understanding for an otherwise changing Board of Directors.

Mutual Advantages of CMTEC

In addition to supplying a financial base for implementing programs that are mutually advantageous for CMTEC area public schools and the college, one of the greatest advantages of CMTEC is its unity. When a recommendation is passed at a general business meeting, it then becomes something that is supported by all of the participants rather than just one or two school districts or a small segment of the total program. Changes can be made much more smoothly with this kind of endorsement than through individual requests. When a recommendation is endorsed by all the school districts in which major field experiences are taking place, one can be reasonably sure the change is sound; also, college administrators can be sure there is widespread desire and commitment to have that particular change made.

Another major advantage of a cooperative council of this type is the general attitude of professionals toward a program they have helped design and in which they have a voice. The deep commitment of thoughts, talents, time, and money is apparent in the dedication of people attending conferences on their own time, contacting their representatives to share ideas on field experiences, developing programs and ideas for programs, and partially financing programs they believe are worthwhile professionally. This is undoubtedly a different and deeper kind of commitment to teacher education that is sincere and professional in nature, and is easily observable in all the CMTEC districts as their direct involvement in policy-making, idea-sharing on an equal basis continues at all levels.

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